

MITIGATION, INDIRECTION, AND WOMEN'S SPEECH:  
A SPEECH ACT APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION

Some of the recent work on women's speech has been concentrated on the issue of women's 'linguistic insecurity', that is, on the claim that women are generally less assertive, more uncertain and hesitant in conversation than men are. Such studies usually follow the lead of Robin Lakoff's discussion in Language and Women's Place (1975), focusing on those indicators of verbal timidity she first identified--tag questions, hedging expressions like kind of or sort of, mitigating phrases like I think or I don't know, or indirect utterances like 'You could go home tomorrow' (as opposed to 'I want you to go home tomorrow'). If we assume the rough correlation Lakoff postulates between the frequency of such variables and speaker insecurity, then the research task is fairly uncomplicated: to discover whether or not one speaker or group of speakers is more linguistically uncertain than another, we need only record them in similar conversational situations and tabulate variables of this sort. Certainly this seems to be a reasonable approach; we naturally feel that someone who says I guess or probably more often than someone who does not is more conversationally insecure. Or at least we suspect that such a speaker will be perceived as weak or unassertive by her interlocutors.

Surprisingly, however, this has not at all been the attitude toward mitigation, hedging, and indirection of speech act theorists like John Searle (1979) or Bruce Fraser (1975;1976), or even of sociolinguists who have imported speech act theory into their work--as William Labov does, for instance, in Therapeutic Discourse: Psychotherapy as Conversation (1977). Where one logical possibility is to stress speaker insecurity as the major implication of mitigating and hedging expressions, ordinary language philosophers have tended to view them as strategic, as accomplishing practical conversational functions. Fraser (1976:1-2) even defines mitigation as hearer directed, as speakers' attempts to modulate some more 'basic message' in terms of their listeners. In speech act terminology, speakers mitigate in an attempt to produce in their hearers a certain 'perlocutionary effect'. A mitigated utterance, Fraser notes (1976:6-8), can enable a speaker to make positive--possibly self-serving--conversational gains. As she mitigates or hedges, a speaker may increase the probability of the acceptance of her utterance, may thereby generate cooperation in her audience; she may forestall a hearer's negative reaction to unwelcome information--and its unpleasant effects on her; and she may even (although, strictly speaking, Fraser would not call this mitigation) weaken the commitments she is pres-

sured to make by hedging her offers and promises.

We have, then, two competing explanations of mitigation, both of which make good intuitive sense: one postulates that speakers mitigate when they feel insecure, the other that they merely anticipate the effect of their speech actions on others. The purpose of this analysis was essentially to solve this problem, the problem of how best to characterize mitigating behavior, to decide whether mitigated and hedged constructions invariably need be associated with weakness, speaker insecurity, perhaps powerlessness, or whether they could be described as practical, strategic, possibly even as manipulative. The results at least suggest that mitigation is not inconsistent with strong, directive speaker action, and that linguistically insecure speakers may not automatically be identified by the overall frequency of their use of these variables.

#### METHODOLOGY

To make any claims about mitigation in general--or about the function of mitigated and hedged utterances for particular speakers in certain conversational situations--it is obviously necessary to develop regular criteria by which to distinguish hearer focused mitigation from mitigators and hedges that are simple reflexes of a speaker's emotional response. Of course, it may be that at some level these two characterizations of mitigating behavior are only apparently contradictory: perhaps speech acts that are somehow speaker sensitive, strategic are so simply because speakers are hesitant, are forced to strategize because they are reluctant to offend. Yet it should still be possible to differentiate between utterances aimed at influencing a speaker's responses and actions (and mitigation in this context could be associated with some amount of speaker insecurity) and speech acts that imply little speaker investment in hearers' reactions--except, of course, in their continued polite attention--where speaker insecurity would be more strongly indicated because manipulative intentions could be excluded.

It was in order to make just these distinctions that the method of analysis here was developed from principles central to speech act theory. It naturally assumes the much repeated notions that the speech act is the basic semantic unit, that what speakers say is to be distinguished from what actions they perform on others as they speak, and that context and speaker intention are crucial to meaning. The conversational analysis thus attempts to identify underlying speech actions rather than tabulate surface sentence types. The classification and identification of speech acts relies especially on Searle's streamlined account of indirection and his speech act taxonomy (1979), on Labov and Fanshel's conversational analysis (1977), especially on their more extensive discussion of indirection and their account of conversational propositions, and on Fraser's analysis of the co-occurrence possibilities between mitigators, hedges and performative verbs (1975).

One problem with this approach, however, is that speech act discussions focus on 'performative' utterances, in which verbs are said to explicitly announce speaker intention (as in 'I hereby warn you to get off my property'), and speakers rarely characterize their speech actions this way in natural conversation. Taxonomies of speech acts often end up as lists of performative verbs, and hedges and mitigators are correlated with verbs assumed to be identical with the hypothetical speaker's intention. My solution is to rely on Searle's principles of the 'point' and 'direction of fit' of utterances to generally identify speech acts (and ignore the problem of postulating an underlying performative verb for each utterance), and to extend Fraser's thinking about the correlation between hedges and types of verbs to possible correlations between mitigating and hedging expressions and Searle's broader speech act categories.

#### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data (see Tables III a and b) were collected from a small number of female informants (five) of approximately the same age (twenty-five to thirty-one years, except for speaker D, who is forty), and of roughly equivalent educational backgrounds (all speakers are in their fourth, fifth, or sixth year of graduate school in the same university department). Each speaker is a member of the same loosely defined social group; that is, they meet together regularly at lunches and at after-hours social occasions as well as at various departmental meetings. Two of the speakers (A and B) were initially defined as dominant by a number of measures: both have held two or more official (elected) positions in departmental organizations or on committees, both are known as successful, dominant personalities, and both are generally thought of by the other graduate students with whom they associate as especially verbal (speaker A is often characterized as forward and verbose, and speaker B's frank assertiveness is a subject of teasing comment). Informants C, D, and E, by default, were identified as non-dominant, but also because their generally supposed non-aggressiveness is again a topic of discussion.<sup>1</sup> Informant C had once held an official group position but no longer does so; speaker E had been elected chair of one departmental organization, but her distinctive duties were being gradually assumed by speaker A and other group members.

Conversations were recorded in five different situations: at one meeting of a graduate student organization, at two meetings of a department women's group, at a supper in one informant's home, and at one spontaneous lunch-time gathering. The total conversation time transcribed and tabulated was one hour to an hour and twenty minutes for each speaker in the official department meetings (defined as formal), and one and one half hours for the social occasions (defined as informal).<sup>2</sup>

In order to eventually correlate mitigating expressions with speech act types, utterance boundaries were marked on the transcriptions as follows.<sup>3</sup> A main clause and any attached subordinate clauses were counted as a single unit, coordinated main clauses as two. The only exceptions to this rule were clauses that began with subordinators but which were separated from a previous utterance both by a significant pause and a drop in the speaker's intonation pattern. Utterances containing broken grammatical constructions were eliminated if the unfinished construction was part of a main clause, but counted if only the attached subordinate clauses remained uncompleted (mitigating expressions in such clauses, however, were left untabulated). The examples below illustrate:

1. Well, we can't really solve what's already happened, but I think that what we can do is to try to talk to [name] (two units, two mitigating expressions)
2. Well, um, it's kinda a weird situation, 'cause I think that, well it's (trails off). . . . (one unit, one mitigating expression)
3. Send out a little survey that asks for volunteers. (lengthy pause) 'Cause some people don't wanna participate. (two units, no mitigating expressions)

These utterance units were subsequently classified according to adaptations of Searle's speech act taxonomy (1979:1-29):

1. Commissives

This category includes expressions of commitment--offers, promises, pledges, and so on. Commissives were identified for the sole purpose of eliminating them from the final tabulation, since it is impossible for mitigators to imply either speaker insecurity or hearer sensitivity in this context. Because the point of a commissive is to obligate the speaker to some future action, mitigation here serves only to weaken the speaker's own commitment and responsibilities.

2. A-assertions and 3. D-assertions

Searle's category is termed 'assertives' and groups utterances that express belief about some state of affairs, about 'something's being the case' (1979:12). Assertives were divided here into two subsets (this on the basis of Labov and Fanshel's discussion, 1977:100-102) that are more revealing for this analysis--into A-assertions, expressing something only the speaker herself could be said to know about, something in the realm of her own private feelings and experiences, and D-assertions, disputable assertions about matters that

are somehow public ground, are available for general examination. These categories thus distinguish between unassailable assertions and those it is possible for other speakers to doubt, question, or attack.

#### 4. Directives

The directive category includes all speakers' attempts to get hearers to perform some action, as in suggestions, commands, demands, or requests of any kind.

#### 5. Requests for information or confirmation<sup>4</sup>

Strictly speaking, requests for information are a subset of directives (Labov and Fanshel 1977:88-93), but they are directives of a minimal sort; that is, they require only that the hearer respond, not agree or promise or perform some more complicated action. Again this subdivision distinguishes between speech acts that infringe in some way on listeners and those that do not.

(Examples of speech act types extracted from the transcriptions are listed in Table I.)

Finally, mitigating and hedging expressions--mitigating verbs, mitigating adverbials and modals, disclaiming phrases, and certain kinds of indirection--were tabulated according to the speech act categories (examples from the texts are listed in Table II).<sup>5</sup> Mitigating modals are really also cases of indirection: they are literally about a hearer's ability or desire to perform some action, as in 'Could you shut the door?' Included under the category 'indirection', then, are other sorts of oblique references, usually in directives, to such things as the possible (positive) consequences of performing some action, the existential status of some object involved in the action, or a speaker's responsibility for performing an action (see Labov and Fanshel 1977:84-86). Disclaimers were defined as phrases that apologize in some way for an assertion or requested action (Fraser 1976:12-13). The final results are indicated in Table III (separate tabulations are shown for the transcriptions of formal and informal conversations).

TABLE I:  
Examples in Speech Act Categories

1. Commissives  
 --Bob, do you want me to get a fork?  
 --Well, I'll volunteer to have it in three weeks, say, at my apartment--or two--three weeks.
2. A-assertions  
 --And--I--you know--I'm real unhappy with what ends up happening.  
 --I've never read Riffaterre, 'cause I only--don't read the stuff on poetry.
3. D-assertions  
 --It's sorta like they can do anything that someone doesn't stop them from doing.  
 --I didn't think they did a good enough job with it--though, you know, it was a good idea--like the stuff--stuff with the modern. . . .
4. Directives  
 --Well, how 'bout something like if Compac wrote up some kinda memo to people who are planning to do composition research involving TA's in the future and asking them to--would they please take these things into consideration.  
 --Well maybe just, you know, for the future, which is all we can really talk about, is, perhaps, first of all, write a little note from Compac to everyone.
5. Requests for information or confirmation  
 --What administrative things could you eliminate for the comp. teachers other than participating in this study?  
 --Doctor Bill Loan--so he's done the same thing in other states.

TABLE I:  
Examples of Mitigating and Hedging Expressions

1. Mitigating verbs  
 --But I don't think Delta Dental has its own dentists.  
 --I guess my need is just for more contact.
2. Hedges (adverbials)  
 --Well, ah, something like this could probably help--sense of regularity if we have regular meetings.  
 --For one thing, I don't know, I kinda feel that he's not being honest.

3. Mitigating modals

--I would think she knows already.

--We could talk to [name] and we could ask her to write a memo.

4. Indirection

--It might be worthwhile asking them to say--ah--either with a memo or hold a meeting for all comp. teachers.

--It might be nice if they not only mitigated but explained why it's important.

5. Disclaimers

--Well like maybe, if it's at all possible, to ask like--I would maybe--not to exchange papers per se, but I would like to see if we have proposals for something.

--These mounds builders or whatever they are are a big thing in Ohio.

## METHODOLOGICAL RESULTS

In some respects the analysis proved how well suited the insights of speech act theory are for theoretical discussions in which postulated speaker intentions and contextual conditions can be specified for the sake of a particular argument, and how little suited in some ways these same insights are for application to natural, spontaneous conversations, where the complications of a social context involving several speakers with a long history of regular interaction suggest a wider range of interpretive possibilities for each utterance. Conversation among such speakers is multi-layered; it involves a number of shared, assumed propositions, against which speech acts are interpreted. As Labov and Fanshel describe the problem, social familiars respond to one another at 'many levels of abstraction', and their utterances are bound together by 'a web of understandings and reactions' (1977:30). It is thus not surprising that the classification of utterance types proved to be more problematic than anticipated, even given the speech act framework.

It became obviously necessary, as the analysis progressed, to 'put a ceiling' on possible levels of interpretation, to develop more explicit and specific procedures for determining categories of speech acts. As a general rule, it seemed most appropriate to limit the information applied in interpretation to the immediate verbal and social context. This would allow for such considerations as a speaker's response to the understood goals of the conversation, to what other speakers have just said, and would take account of a speaker's knowledge of the social positions of her various interlocutors, of what most speakers would recognize as their social rights and responsibilities; yet it would exclude such things as possible references to past events (when nothing in the verbal context suggests it), or to certain general shared propositions (Labov and Fanshel: 1977:51-58) such as 'person X is too aggressive' or 'person Y sympathizes too often with senior faculty on department issues'.<sup>6</sup> This general principle generated these procedural rules:

1. Requests for information are scrutinized for possible interpretation as directives, since directives often take this surface form, but only in the context of some immediate goal. Thus the literal request 'Do you think we should get X to write a new memo?' is counted as a directive, a suggestion, in the context of a discussion of possible group action, but not as an assertive of some sort, as it may be on a more abstract level (about X's incompetence, for example, given a situation in which X's past failures have been much discussed).
2. Apparent statements of commitment are examined for likely interpretation as D-assertions or directives. 'Do you want me to see if I can find a comb?', for instance, a surface request for information, is easily interpreted as an offer, a commissive. But in the context of a situation in which the hearer's hair is



obviously out of place, it may be interpreted as a directive (aimed simply at getting the listener to fix her hair). Once again, however, it may not be counted as a higher-level assertive (perhaps as about this person's usually unkempt appearance).

3. A-assertions are interpreted very narrowly, on the assumption that speakers often attempt to characterize D-assertions as statements about private feelings or belief in order to facilitate their interlocutors' acceptance of them. (Compare 'I feel sick' to 'I thought the movie was bad'.)

With these additional guidelines, then, I was finally able to limit the interpretive possibilities and classify speech act types with some consistency.

#### RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

An important first conclusion to be drawn from the data (see Table III) is that the informants--at least in formal contexts--did not mitigate in some general way, but in order to accomplish specific conversational goals. The mitigated and hedged constructions were very much audience directed and seemed, in fact, to work according to some basic principle of conversational economy. That is, speech acts that required most of a speaker's interlocutors were most heavily hedged and mitigated; those that demanded least of the hearer were less frequently modulated in these ways.<sup>7</sup> Thus all the informants (Table III-a) mitigated most frequently when they were suggesting the hearer perform an action--consent to some group activity or participate in some task--and next most often when they were making assertions open to dispute--and so implicitly appealing to their listeners for agreement and belief. Requests for information (which ask another speaker merely to respond, to say something) and A-assertions (which simply require someone else's attention) were in all cases mitigated least.

If the principle of 'economy' is correct, we would expect this pattern to be repeated, only at lower levels, in casual conversation where familiarity would enable speakers to assert and request more freely. And the distribution of hedges and mitigators by kinds of speech acts in Table III-b does essentially duplicate that in the first table, with the exception that percentages of mitigated directives fall to a new low (at least this is true for speaker A).<sup>8</sup> Of course, the raw number of directives itself drops and so the data here are rather unrevealing; when people speak informally they have no defined group task to accomplish, and they consequently produce fewer requests, orders, suggestions, bits of advice. But also--and this would explain the problem even if further data were still to indicate small percentages of mitigated directives in informal contexts--the actions that are likely to be proposed in casual situations are of a minimal sort, requiring little mitigation because,

TABLES III a AND III b:  
Mitigations and Hedges Tabulated by Speech Act Categories

Formal Contexts

Speech Acts

	Speakers	A-assert.	D-assert.	Direct.	Req.-Info.	TOTAL
		(4/52) 7.7%	(40/90) 44.4%	(22/23) 95.7%	(0/9) 0%	(66/174) 38%
A						
B		(0/10) 0%	(26/65) 40%	(8/8) 100%	(0/10) 0%	(34/93) 36.6%
C		(1/3) xx	(2/21) 9.5%	(0/2) xx	(1/2) xx	(4/28) 14.3%
D		(3/20) 15%	(10/21) 47.6%	(7/6) 100%+	(0/5) 0%	(20/52) 38.4%
E		(5/14) 35.7%	(13/42) 40%	(15/17) 88.2%	(0/2) 0%	(33/73) 45.2%

Informal Contexts

Speech Acts

	Speakers	A-assert.	D-assert.	Direct.	Req.-Info.	TOTAL
		(6/104) 5.8%	(13/68) 19.1%	(0/7) 0%	(0/12) 0%	(18/191) 9.4%
A						
B		(1/13) 7.8%	(7/27) 25.9%	(0/1) xx	(2/24) 8.3%	(10/64) 15.6%
C		(13/73) 17.8%	(18/83) 21.7%	(2/7) 28.6%	(0/13) 0%	(33/176) 18.8%
D		(6/35) 17.1%	(10/26) 38.5%	(0/0) xx	(0/9) 0%	(16/70) 22.9%
E		(0/38) 0%	(0/9) 0%	(0/3) xx	(0/4) xx	(0/54) 0%

once again, they demand little of the hearer. Directives like 'Get me a cup of coffee too' or 'Here, take this dollar' are frequent in informal settings. It would seem reasonable, then, to continue to predict mitigation by noting first how much 'hearer work' a particular utterance demands, especially since D-assertions consistently fit the pattern.

A second central point is that there is evidence here that mitigating behavior is not at all incompatible with aggressiveness and verbal dominance. If speakers were hesitant and insecure, we would expect speech act categories to register a more even distribution of hedges and mitigators, and we would expect A-assertions especially to reflect speakers' conversational insecurity; would not hesitant speakers mitigate in asserting feelings or in relating experiences as well as in proposing actions for others? Yet this is generally not the case, although speakers D and E tend to mitigate more in this environment than other speakers. At any rate, they are the informants other speakers do characterize as insecure. And further, since speaker D's expressed wish at one of the formal meetings was to use the group gatherings as a place to explore personal feelings, she was more concerned with representing the nuances of her personal reactions than were other speakers. (Her age may also account for some difference here.)

The most striking indication, however, that informants who mitigate heavily are not necessarily insecure is that speakers A and B, who have already been identified as the most dominant informants in the group, mitigate as much as (or more than) the other speakers in formal contexts. And certainly these informants could be described as 'controlling' speakers in at least two additional respects: speaker A regularly controlled the floor for longer than other speakers (and this applied in both casual and formal contexts); and both, in the official meetings, were usually able to produce a greater number of utterances in a given period of time than the others. This was especially true at the start of formal group meetings where speakers A and B characteristically took the initiative by announcing the start of official business, defining the purpose of the meeting, or identifying group issues--even in cases where they were not required by any official position to do so. Thus in the first thirty minutes of one meeting speaker A produced eighty utterances, speaker B twenty-seven, and speakers C and D seven and none respectively. In the first thirty minutes of a second meeting (a more egalitarian one since no officials had yet been elected, and since the gathering was defined as one in which everyone could--and should--air their grievances) speaker A was still able to dominate with fifty-seven utterance units, while the tabulations for the other informants were twenty-two (speaker B), five (speaker C), twenty-two (speaker D), and twenty (for E).<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting that it was this initiating, group defining behavior that was most mitigated (rates of mitigation fell notice-

ably as meetings progressed). B's remarks at one meeting illustrate; her speech is marked by mitigations, hedges, and hesitations:

Right. Somebody should--we're not gonna really have that much for minutes. We're just gonna decide about--I don't really think we need--I don't really think we need to do minutes, since what we decide will be our minutes. Do you wanna--should we--do you wanna know what [name] and [name] said first? They want the number of sections--thirty. And they're really--that's. . . .

All this suggests that not only is mitigation not necessarily to be associated with weak, powerless speakers, but that it may, in fact, be a kind of tradeoff for power, a way of appearing to be less directive, perhaps, or a way of directing others while also signalling a willingness to give way at some point. Mitigation may indicate in some contexts, therefore, not so much a reduction of commitment to one's own suggestions and assertions, as a desire to facilitate conversational interaction, to allow others to make contradictory propositions more easily. It is worth noting in this regard that the graduate students at these meetings are particularly sensitive to the language in which senior faculty members attempt to direct their actions. (The students are in a peculiar 'in between' political position in the department that they resent; they teach almost as much as senior faculty but have little power or authority.) Often a meeting involves explicit discussion of the wording of the messages senior faculty members aim at graduate students, as in this excerpt where a student discusses a professor's 'improper' request:

Well also, she sent that memo, and maybe if it had been phrased like it was for--like 'I know this is an inconvenience, but if you could help me I would greatly appreciate it--it would make my research much more valid'--I think maybe people wouldn't have this feeling like 'I'm being put upon and nobody asked me if I would do this and yet here I am.'<sup>10</sup>

It is not unlikely that this sensitivity carries over into other portions of the formal meetings, and that these speakers are careful not to trigger in their fellow students the kind of resentment they themselves feel toward faculty members.

And this may help explain, too, a final feature of the data, the extreme style shifting between formal and informal contexts. Once again the dominant speakers (A and B) equal or exceed the others in the percent increase in mitigation between casual and careful speaking styles (compare III-a and III-b). This stylistic difference is such as to be noticeable on some level to at least some other speakers. Informant C, for example, who is the lone exception to this upward shift, was unusually resentful of speaker A: 'Oh that [name] just drives me crazy at those meetings. Even her voice--her whole manner changes'. Although the informant was un-

able to describe precisely what irritated her (she referred generally to A's 'voice' and 'manner'), she focused on A's verbal behavior, and was probably responding to the sudden increase of mitigating expressions in the dominant speaker's more careful conversation. Her implication is that these 'changes' merely veil A's wish to direct and dominate. (Speaker C's own speech behavior is remarkably consistent with her attitude, since she doesn't herself shift styles for the purpose of the group meetings.) At any rate, whether or not this speaker's marked change in style is perceived by her interlocutors, and whether such changes in speaking styles are resented or appreciated, again mitigators and hedges seem to be connected to dominating, controlling speaker activity.

Even though it cannot capture all the nuances of a speaker's use of mitigating expressions in natural conversation, the speech act framework proves to be an adequate and accurate predictor of where such expressions will occur. Although it was postulated at the start that speaker insecurity of some kind is still a possible--though less likely--interpretation of mitigated forms appearing in D-assertions and directives, this does not seem to be a strong possible association here, especially for the two dominant speakers, whose levels of mitigation increase just when they are most forcefully directing others' actions. This is not to say, of course, that mitigators and hedges never indicate speaker uncertainty or hesitation: certainly this is their implication in A-assertions and for speakers who register a more even distribution of hedged and mitigated expressions across types of speech acts (as speakers D and E, perhaps, in this case). Contrary to what we might have believed, then, about mitigated utterances, they are not always simple betrayals of a speaker's conversational nervousness or insecurity. And, contrary to what we might have believed about mitigating speakers, they are not so likely to be merely uncertain as strategic and sensitive to the effects of their speech on others.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Much discussion in this department surrounds the issue of students who are said to be intelligent and deserving, but who are passed over for favors (extra courses, and so on) because they are too reticent to be noticed by senior faculty members.

<sup>2</sup>The raw number of utterances seems low for this amount of conversation time, but the hour to an hour and a half refers to the time informants were present at conversational events, not the total time each informant was actually speaking. And other speakers were present who of course sometimes took the floor from informants.

<sup>3</sup>This is a somewhat arbitrary association of underlying speech actions with main clauses, but it is a practical way to limit the

number of speech acts postulated.

<sup>4</sup>Requests for confirmation are surface statements heard as requests for information because they refer to events only the listener has access to (Labov and Fanshel 1977:100-101).

<sup>5</sup>These expressions were originally tabulated according to various syntactic positions, but no significant patterns emerged. Verbs as higher predicates (I think that) were included in the count with I think tags, because even though such constructions seem to express less uncertainty, they are rather ambiguous on the matter of speaker commitment (this may be their advantage).

<sup>6</sup>See Labov and Fanshel's discussion of various background propositions (Labov and Fanshel 1977:51-58). I've made a slightly different distinction between these and the immediate context.

<sup>7</sup>Brown and Levinson develop a similar principle (in a more complicated discussion) to explain various kinds of politeness phenomena (1978:60-96).

<sup>8</sup>Speaker E is something of an exception (there is no 'distribution' to speak of for her in informal contexts, even though she mitigates most in formal ones). But this is because most of her remarks were assertions in narrative sequences, and these are infrequently mitigated.

<sup>9</sup>I'm not certain why speaker B is reticent here.

<sup>10</sup>She essentially complains that a memo wasn't mitigated enough.

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